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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000882

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CEN, DS/OP/WHA, CA, INL, AND DRL
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CEN

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SUBJECT: GUNMEN SHOOT ADVANCE CAR OF HONDURAN FIRST LADY
AGUAS DE MADURO; GOH SAYS ATTEMPTED ROBBERY LIKELY REASON

Classified By: Ambassador Larry Palmer; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) According to Honduran Minister of Public Security Oscar Alvarez, an advance car for Honduran First Lady Aguas Santas Ocana de Maduro was shot by unknown gunmen near the town of Los Limones on the road from Olanchito to the Caribbean coastal city of Trujillo in the Department of Yoro, at approximately 11:30 a.m. Honduran time on April 10. Note: A separate GOH source gave the location as near the town of Los Encuentros (near La Union) in the Department of Olancho. End Note. The driver of the advance car was wounded in the leg by the gunfire; the other two occupants of the car were apparently not injured. No suspects have been caught. The GOH does not believe that the gunmen knew that the car was an advance car for the First Lady, who was in Tegucigalpa at the time of the incident.

2. (U) Alvarez told the DCM that the car was advancing a planned trip via helicopter by the First Lady to Trujillo. He emphasized that the First Lady was never scheduled to travel by car and that her helicopter flight had been canceled due to bad weather. The First Lady told ConGen that she was ok, but shaken by the incident.

3. (U) Whether it was on highway 41 in the Department of Olancho, known as the "corridor of death," or highway 23 in the Department of Yoro, both have been the scene of violent robberies in the past in which gunmen have shot at cars and buses to disable the vehicles or force the vehicles to stop. Gunmen then have robbed the drivers/passengers of the vehicles.

4. (U) Post notes that President Ricardo Maduro has been in Washington, DC since April 9 for the Central American presidents meeting with the President to discuss CAFTA. The two have been married since October 2002. The First Lady is a Spaniard.

5. (C) Comment: Given the fact that the First Lady never intended to travel by car, Post has no reason to believe that this was anything other than an attempted robbery, but EmbOffs will follow-up with GOH contacts as the incident is investigated further. End Comment.
Palmer